

Left Caucus Newsletter

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The challenge before the NDP convention

By Gord Doctorow
Oriole NDP

When the people of Ontario chose an NDP government in September, 1990, they were voting for a solution to the looming recession. The effects of the recession were already evident: plant shutdowns, rising unemployment, increases in welfare rolls, withering of social services, flourishing of food banks, and a growing population of working poor.



NDP-labor alliance: where do we go from here?

It was not only the economy that weighed on their minds but the notion of an urgent reordering of the priorities of society in order to ensure a decent quality of life. Environmental concerns figured in a wide variety of issues. Tenants wanted affordable rents. The thousands of homeless wanted a safe, clean place to live in. Women were seeking affordable childcare and pay equity. And so did people of color and the disabled. Native people were struggling for land claim settlements. People of color wanted the justice system to treat them with fairness and respect for their dignity by having civilian control of the police. Many people were mobilized by various social movements during the elections to press for these concerns.

These challenges have taken on an urgency as the recession deepens while expectations remain high. The NDP responded with an electoral program of radical reform: the Agenda for People. This program took dead aim at "the big money interests" and was a bold and fighting declaration that envisaged social justice and redistribution of wealth.

However, many items in our program have yet to be adequately addressed, cast as they are, in the shadow of the deepening recession. For example, the promise of 20,000 non-profit housing units this year awaits action. A small increase in social assistance rates has been implemented but falls short of meeting urgent needs. Metro Toronto region is in dire need of implementation of the Agenda's promises to extend and improve public transit.

Clearly, the Agenda for People, already partially implemented, was designed to meet the real needs of the population. But the bad news is that the recession is hampering its implementation by creating alarming numbers of lay-

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For mass circulation NDP-labor paper

By Harry Kopyto
St. Andrew-St. Patrick NDP

When the NDP in Ontario won the election last September, every daily newspaper in the province opposed the election of an NDP government. The media unanimously ended up backing the Liberal Party, which was best poised to block an NDP victory when it became apparent that the NDP might take power.

The newspaper chains — Southam, Torstar, the Thompson chain and the others — are part of the network of monopolies that dominate dissemination of information to the public, both through print and electronic means.

Not only do the owners of the media share the same social and economic interests as the Big Business establishment, but they frequently see their role as one of "influencing" public opinion. The impact exerted by the media is considerable. It has eliminated coverage of important issues (the *Globe*, for example, fired its last remaining labor reporter recently while augmenting its stable of business writers). It has attacked the NDP during elections while wooing NDP supporters at other times (The *Toronto Star*). It has generally promoted a cynical attitude to social change or actively promoting a campaign against it. The media has proven loyal and useful to the status quo.

The election victory of the NDP should not lull us into a false sense of security about the impact of the media. Editorial writers are now exerting pressure to prevent the NDP from "alienating the business community", "undermining confidence in the economic stability of the province" and taking radical measures. The common assumption of the media pundits is that ideological excesses cannot be tolerated in recessionary times.

The Party membership, however, can counteract these efforts to set the agenda for the NDP government. A collective exchange of views on the key issues of the day, permitting the broadest participation of the NDP membership can be insured by creating our own newspaper, able to challenge the establishment media both within and outside the Party. It is futile and naïve to expect fair treatment from the media conglomerates. We need to create a regular public paper published in the interest of working people, one as loyal to the labor movement as the establishment media is to the business elite.

A public labor paper should solicit views from its readers on all the burning issues of the day and open its pages to all tendencies on the left. It should give support to various struggles, act as the voice of the labor movement, as the organizer of the NDP, as a fund-raising vehicle, as a discussion bulletin and as an educator.

Convention resolutions have already been proposed calling for the publication of the Ontario Democrat with greater frequency (monthly) and opening up its pages to the membership on a regular basis. In time, the Ontario Democrat could become a daily paper distributed publicly and counteracting the establishment media. It is the duty and responsibility of socialists and the labor movement to challenge the monopoly of the Big Business press. While it would take time, money and much effort to develop such a mass, public organ, the challenge is

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NDP challenge: socialist measures

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Toronto region is in dire need of implementation of the Agenda's promises to extend and improve public transit.

Clearly, the Agenda for People, already partially implemented, was designed to meet the real needs of the population. But the bad news is that the recession is hampering its implementation by creating alarming numbers of layoffs and permanent losses of jobs due to industrial restructuring. The federal Tories' high interest rate policy — secretly agreed to by the Tories as part of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) — has created a homegrown recession. It dampened business investment in Canada and forced the Canadian dollar up so that Canadian goods became less competitive despite the FTA. Canada's trade surplus has drastically declined as a result and so more shut-downs and layoffs have occurred. Fundamental economic activity is departing Canada to relocate to low-wage, poor-benefits, non-union plants in the southern U.S. and Mexico.

This is all in accordance with the priorities of Big Business in Canada which is thoroughly continentalist. Not only is corporate power integrated as a junior partner of the U.S. capitalist elite; it is also more concentrated than in any other advanced industrialized society. This group sets the agenda for their political parties in government. The Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), a cabal of the Chief Executive Officers of 150 of Canada's largest corporations, intervened with full page ads in favor of the FTA and Mulroney during the last federal election. Now, they finance "research" on all kinds of political issues — from the constitution to inter-provincial trade — with financial and personnel backing from Ottawa. They promoted the GST and social spending cutbacks as means of making Canada more competitive in international trade.

The signs of rapid transformation of the North American economy are in plain view. Canada is joining in the Mexico-U.S. free trade talks. The incipient trend of plant relocations from Canadian sites, where unions exist to ensure decent wages and benefits and where taxes are relatively high, to the Mexican "free economic zone" and the southern U.S. will be exacerbated under an extended continental free trade agreement. It will spell a more thorough de-industrialization of Canada. Canadian workers can only look forward to chronic unemployment and under-employment, loss of communities because of runaway plants from single industry towns, and increasing welfare rolls. Permanent restructuring will act against the return to the old status quo after the recession. The old jobs will be gone. Piecemeal reforms intended to soften the blows through improved severance, protected wages after plants shut down, and increasing regulations regarding shutdowns do not address the problem. How can jobs and communities be preserved when Canada's economy is challenged to be competitive on terms that are inherently disadvantageous (small internal market, high transportation costs, high taxes, high wages, etc.)? They can't.

Algoma Steel is a case in point. At its recent peak, about 5,300 workers were employed in its Sault Ste. Marie operations. Algoma, at full production, supplies 70 to 80 per cent of Canada's structural steel. But it recently went through a strike after which only 1,870 workers were recalled and its parent corporation Dofasco refused to invest further in the company which has an \$800 million debt. Bob Rae has called upon the company, the Steelworkers union, and financial institutions to work together to bail the company out. It appears that workers will have to finance the bailout with losses of jobs and reductions of wages and benefits. But how far are lenders willing to go when continental industries are being shaken up? Steel and auto industries are the backbone of Ontario's prosperity. The possible loss of Algoma and the current losses of auto parts feeder industries are devastating to single-

industry towns. The economic obstacles seem insurmountable.

Government intervention of the type proposed by Bob Rae is only a stopgap measure. The fundamental, centrifugal forces of economic decay are directed by outside market forces, by Big Business, and by the Tory government. The NDP is challenged to intervene boldly with an alternative economic vision. The alternative to wholesale integration into corporate continentalism is a socialist and independent Canada. The only means of staving off the destruction of the Canadian economy is to introduce economic planning now, starting in Ontario. Public ownership of key enterprises like Algoma and de Havilland Aircraft is not an ideological nicety but an indispensable step for maintaining jobs and industries. But public ownership is only a first step. Plans for a rational distribution of industry and services across many communities, taking advantage of natural resources and skilled labor and technology, could act to provide a buoyant economic alternative. Through mechanisms of workers' self-management and community involvement in the goals of production, it would be possible to provide production for need and not just for profit.

The NDP's record of reforms have inspired great hopes, which if unfulfilled could come back to haunt us in the next election. While tenants appreciate the NDP's restriction of rent increases, that will not guarantee decent and plentiful housing. The government will have to intervene to force the landlords, who have shown their willingness to blackmail the elected government by their anti-investment ads in the Wall Street Journal, to keep the buildings clean and in good repair. The government will have to provide low cost housing by developing it, using Crown lands and good quality construction — not the inferior materials used for subsidized, cooperative housing. Housing is the most important factor in determining poverty. Instead of funnelling funds into maintaining food banks, we should be providing low cost housing. 70,000 people in Toronto can't afford food because rent is too high. People don't need charity; they need good, quality affordable housing.

Can we afford to go into such businesses in the midst of a recession? The government has the ability to expropriate businesses, to collect unpaid taxes on giant corporations (many of whom are pulling out), and to enter into agreements with other socialist economies. Ontario is a province of immense wealth, with a skilled labor force, an experienced technical and managerial elite, and excellent research facilities. Let these resources be harnessed for the good of all rather than the privileges of the few.

Ontario is not alone. NDP governments will likely be formed in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Including the NDP government in the Yukon, a determined and combined strategy can set the stage for an NDP victory federally. As the labor party of Canada, the NDP can act to mobilize workers across the country to support the alternative: an independent and socialist Ontario in an independent and socialist Canada.

NDP-labor paper urgently needed

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squarely posed and cannot be ignored. The first step can be taken now by supporting the resolutions calling for the Ontario Democrat to be published with regular frequency and to have its pages opened to contributions from the ridings.

ONDP backs Native self-determination

By Lennox Farrell
Oriole NDP

As a boy in Trinidad and Tobago, I usually spent my Saturday afternoons watching "westerns" in the theatre. Most films were about "wild Indians", Hollywood creations whose blood curdling screams were used to terrify the peaceable white settlements. To us, great grandchildren of enslaved Africans, -- people who had themselves been described in the British connection as savages -- there was no difficulty in siding with the civilized, law-abiding and courageous white cowboys.

These boyhood images of Indians have been radically changed. One cannot read books like *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* and not be changed. Experiences of working in solidarity with First Nations organizations in metropolitan cities like Toronto, as well as personal contact with Native people here have also assisted in altering the propagandized views I grew up.



Audrey McLaughlin and Elijah Harper

One of those personal contacts was with some Native people in Thunder Bay recently. I heard story after story of oppression. One young Native woman grieved about the rapes she has suffered on six occasions. She grieved even more because of her 13-year-old niece who has "already been raped for the first time".

Other experiences and information which can alter your views of Canada's First Nations include the oppression they suffer from the prison system. The ratio across Canada of prisoners to the population at large is 1:200. For Native people it approximates 1:8. Also crippling Native people is an illiteracy rate 11 times the national average and a suicide rate three times the national average.

Those conditions continue, not because people at the highest political levels suffer from misinformation. In fact, Brian Mulroney exhibited both the disrespect and deceit which are hallmarks of official thinking. Last summer, in order to get prominent Native spokesperson and NDP MLA Elijah Harper to agree to the Meech Lake Accord getting through the Manitoba Legislature, Mulroney promised sweeping reforms on issues of concern to Native peoples. He completely ignored these much needed and long overdue reforms when Harper refused to accommodate the Accord.

This attitude, though, is not prevalent in all political parties. NDP leader Audrey McLaughlin showed tenacity, solidarity, and creative resolve in her attitude to, and support of, the Mohawk people at Oka last summer. While Mulroney slept and Chrétien hid, she went to the barricades with food.

Provincially, the election of an NDP government augurs well, too, for Native people. Presently, Mike Mitchell,

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Toronto NDPers will contest mayoralty

By Harry Kopyto
St. Andrew-St. Patrick

Three hundred and fifty New Democrats broke into rhythmic applause and enthusiastic foot-stomping, at the February 2, 1991 Toronto City NDP Convention as they approved by a vote of more than 90% a campaign to run a Party label slate headed by a mayoralty candidate in the municipal elections scheduled for November, 1991.

NDP rank-and-file activists from ward organizations representing every part of the City listened intently as Linda Torney, President of the Metro Toronto Labor Council and Brian O'Keefe from CUPE called on the conference to duplicate its provincial success by running an NDP candidate for mayor against present Liberal mayor, Art Eggleton. The city was being defined "by the agenda of the business community ... and by Art Eggleton and his cronies in the development industry," O'Keefe stated as he called for the NDP to articulate an alternative vision of the city. These calls for a high-profile, focussed campaign for an NDP government in Toronto were echoed by other speakers from the union movement, ward organizations and movement activists.

A sprinkling of opposition headed by Alderman Joe Pantalone and former Toronto Alderman Dorothy Thomas (who, in the last municipal election, supported a Liberal mayoralty candidate) decried a mayoralty campaign as a drain on ward resources and a diversion which would result in adding only one vote on council. Thomas attacked the meeting as a rally for Toronto Ward 6 Councillor, Jack Layton. Ironically, she challenged the legitimacy and representative nature of this gathering, which was one of the most impressive gatherings of genuine municipal activists in recent history.

Other speakers pointed out that an NDP mayoralty candidate would complement ward campaigns, give them focus and clarity and result in more efficient joint campaigning. And it was explained that the NDP had a duty to offer residents of Toronto an alternative to establishment politicians at all levels.

The enthusiasm of the gathering will undoubtedly carry through to the spring conference scheduled to nominate a mayoralty candidate. Jack Layton, with a strong record of activism on behalf of tenants and against landlords and developers has already generated the kind of excitement and interest that would enable him to successfully take on the old-line parties as the NDP mayoralty candidate. Throughout his municipal career as an NDP municipal representative, he has mobilized around and spoken out on all the key issues: gay rights, civilian control of the police, peace and disarmament, anti-racism, anti-sexism, radical environmental changes, and the rights of labor.

The 1991 City conference marks the culmination of 25 years of effort by Left Caucus activists and Socialist Caucus members before it, to run label candidates for all municipal positions, including mayor. These efforts, previously gaining only minority support, finally met a wide and enthusiastic response within a rejuvenated party infused with great expectations. Though still leaving the door open to supporting other "progressives" in some wards for "strategic considerations", the NDP is substantially committed to running a full slate with a mayoralty candidate -- a socialist and labor alternative to big business dominion at city hall. This position is both a vindication of the lengthy campaign of the left as well as a dramatic move to deepen accountability and win power for working people in Canada's second largest city.

A critical opinion of Throne Speech

By Barrie Weisleder
Dovercourt NDP

Since its November 20 Throne Speech, the performance of the NDP government has packed all the punch of a featherduster. Certainly, there are positive aspects – such as firm pledges to legislate stronger measures on layoff notice and severance pay, to end Sunday shopping, to ease unionization, and to protect "whistle-blowing" public employees who report on unethical or illegal employer behavior.

The labor bureaucracy seized on these and similar pledges to heap uncritical praise on the new government, and to demobilize rank and file concerns in advance. "I don't know how anyone can be negative about this (Throne) speech," said Gord Wilson, President of the Ontario Federation of Labor. Well, Brother Wilson, try these on for size.

Taxes: During the summer provincial election campaign, the NDP promised a minimum tax on corporations, and new taxes on large inheritances and real estate speculation. Despite its complaints that the \$1 billion-plus debt left by the Liberals will impose onerous limitations on social spending, the NDP Throne Speech only promises the establishment of a Fair Tax Commission to study tax reform. Hasn't tax inequity been studied to death? Why prolong the tax holiday for the multi-millionaires?

Housing: Before election day the NDP called for rent controls and money to build 20,000 new non-profit apartments. Recently the Party tightened controls a bit; but what about significantly increasing the supply of affordable housing?

Childcare: The NDP promised 10,000 new non-profit child-care spaces and subsidies for another 10,000 families. On January 31, the government came up with a grand total of 5,000 new spaces and enough money to raise child care workers' annual salaries from \$17,000 to (gulp) \$19,000 a year.

Education: The Party pledged to increase the province's share of education costs to 60%, starting with an additional \$1.5 billion over two years. On November 20, the speech said education is important to Ontario's future. When pressed, NDP Premier Bob Rae passed the ball to the Fair Tax Commission, which he said will discuss how to increase education funding.

Pensions: The NDP's pre-election promise was to index pensions and to give legal ownership of any surplus in a pension plan to employees. All we got in the Throne Speech was a promise of pension reform.

Choice on Abortion: Although not specifically mentioned on November 20, the government subsequently announced that it will speed up the licensing of free standing abortion clinics and cover all of their costs. The death of the federal abortion law on January 31 in the Senate must have come as a great relief to NDP policy makers who (as they did in Manitoba) are inclined to put obedience to an unjust law ahead of the rights of women.

Labor: Before unionists celebrate recycled Liberal promises for retraining programs and support for labor adjustment committees, we should ask why there is nothing in the Throne Speech about anti-scab legislation or extending the right to strike to all public service employees. Cost couldn't be the government's excuse.

It is all too evident that the Ontario NDP government is content to project a cloudy social vision, and introduce tame policies that will not anger Big Business – even at the risk of alienating the NDP's own social base. The NDP will take five long years to phase in an increase in the

minimum wage (now at an obscenely low \$5.40/hour) to 60% of the average industrial wage (which is itself only \$11.50/hour). What's Bob Rae's rationale for this snail's pace? Avoid dislocations? Does he think MacDonald's is going to pull out of Ontario? I guess the working poor are used to being poor anyways.

Nothing specific on welfare improvements. What about employment equity and pay equity? No action until the government consults with employers. Let's be prudent. What about battling the recession through public initiatives, which the NDP promised to do during the electoral dog days of summer? Well, that's been trimmed neatly back to an expenditure of \$700 million for fixing roads, bridges and sewers.

With no industrial plan of its own, the Ontario NDP seems quite willing and able to fall into the trap of dead end, band-aid reformism, while jobs disappear and living standards fall. This was evident when Bob Rae allowed Varsity Corporation, the remnant of the former farm machinery giant Massey-Ferguson, to complete its move to New York on payment of \$50 million in benefits to former employees. The company received \$200 million in public funds in 1981 for a promise to stay. It was also evident in November when Rae supported a British purchase of Consumers Gas, reversing his own call for public ownership last March.

Will the Rae government even consider public ownership to save the industry and jobs threatened at Algoma Steel? Or will it prefer to bail out the corporation, at public expense, or worse, urge Dofasco to take it over, with certain incentives provided? In Britain, this kind of social democratic capitulation to the imperatives of the capitalist system is called the "new realism". But socialists need not passively accept it – nor content themselves with denouncing it from the sidelines. The point is – to change it! that is, to change the overall relationship of class forces that permits sellouts, by fighting for socialist policies in our social movements, in our unions and inside the NDP.

Sovereignty for Natives is vital

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Grand Chief of the Canadian side of the Akwesasne Reserve, after meeting Bob Rae, Ontario's NDP Premier, said, "I've met everybody from the P.M. down ... and I haven't met anybody (else) who had such a grasp of our situation." Comments of this kind on an NDP premier are not far and few between. They are also not simply praises to curry favor with a powerful politician. The NDP government of Ontario is committed to meeting the demands of First Nations for "self-determination and the settling of Native land claims." As we approach the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in this hemisphere, it is more than ever likely that the only way to ensure that these historic injustices cease, and that a new day of respect and cooperation dawn is to also elect an NDP government federally!

Thus, something made about First Nations in Ottawa can finally correct the misperceptions and the oppressions perpetrated by other things made about "wild Indians" in Hollywood.

Oil and blood in Gulf

By Ron Bobker
Oakville NDP

The following article is a contribution to a discussion of the war in the Gulf.

A summary of the present situation

The U.S. administration did not try very hard to find a diplomatic way of having the Iraqis move their forces of occupation from Kuwait. The U.S. media stressed the fact that Iraq has a large arsenal of chemical weapons and could have enough fissile material for a small atomic bomb. The administration has tacitly admitted that the conflict concerns control of oil reserves in the Gulf: although the Kuwait reserves are not that great in themselves, Kuwait could be a jumping off point for the invasion of Saudi Arabia, which has much larger reserves. The U.S. considers that its economic interests could be seriously threatened if the Iraqis had control of oil production in the Gulf. Partly for this reason the U.S. is seeking to restore the status quo ante, but with a much reduced Iraqi military capability. Another reason for the U.S. precipitation of the war is no doubt that the U.S. armoury contains many sophisticated but untested weapons, and this war presents an ideal opportunity for trying them out. Because the threat from the Soviet Union has largely subsided, many weapons are available; they have already been paid for, and unless they are used now they are likely to be scrapped, untried.

The war as it affects Canada

1. Parliament had not voted on the involvement of Canadian forces in this conflict until the war had in fact commenced. It seems that the Canadian government has the right to send troops into battle without first seeking the approval of Parliament, although having such approval certainly legitimizes the use of the armed forces, and permits military commanders to send the men and women in their command into situations which could result in their death.

2. Canada, has, over the years, built up an international reputation of being a peace-keeping country. Many Canadian troops have served under a United Nations command to help separate hostile forces during tenuous ceasefire situations. It is certain that Canada can no longer play this role in the Middle East, because our country is now perceived as being an agent of the United States.

3. Although the cost of the war will not be known until it is over, it is certain that the Progressive Conservative government is going to use the deployment of Canadian forces as an excuse to cut social spending drastically. It could be argued that one of the objectives of the Mulroney government all along was to find a way to cut social spending without generating widespread discontent, and non-Parliamentary opposition.

4. The war has shown the gross defects in the Canadian armed forces. It is clear that there is virtually no territorial defence of the country, and what forces we have are trained and equipped to fight in off-shore campaigns. The CF-18s are attack aircraft, designed for use within a sophisticated and comprehensive communications and radar network that is not possessed by Canada.

5. The long term national interest of Canada (as it exists today) is not served by this war. Canada is self-sufficient as far as oil is concerned, and the financial burden of the war will not be easy to take in a time of recession. This is in addition to the independent brokerage position Canada could adopt, as has already been discussed.

6. The fact that Canada joined in the hostilities so quickly will reinforce the perception that this country is no more than an adjunct to the U.S. and hence any Canadian position in the future will lack credibility.

The position taken by the NDP

We must first of all congratulate Audrey McLaughlin for her forthright and unequivocal opposition to the war, and for her call to support the peace movement. This was a brave stand to take in Parliamentary situations of this kind, where traditionally there is near unanimity in Parliament for the government's position. Audrey McLaughlin's actions show far more concern for principle than those of Neil Kinnock, leader of the British Labour Party, who voted in favor of his country's participation in the armed conflict.

Audrey McLaughlin and Bob Rae oppose Gulf war
The stand taken by Audrey McLaughlin will undoubtedly be noted by progressive people throughout the country



and will reinforce the fact that the NDP is different from the other parties. Consider how Jean Chrétien voted with the government in spite of his passionate speech against the war the night before the vote was taken; this was another example of crass Liberal opportunism. One presumes that Chrétien was afraid of "losing" the patriotic vote at the next election, while his speech was calculated to give the impression that he really is a progressive.

Bob Rae opposed the war and stated clearly on the eve of the war that sanctions should have been given more time to work, a position endorsed by Bob White, the CAW leader.

What is to be done now?

Although it is tempting to give full support to the coalition forces in the hope that Iraq will be speedily defeated, it is now clear that this will not be easy. Prolonging the war is exceptionally dangerous, not just for the combatants and the innocent civilians but because war of this magnitude can have totally unpredictable repercussions, particularly in an unstable region like the Middle East. The Canadian government should be pressured into undertaking a diplomatic initiative, such as an innovative procedure for a cease fire that will help cut off support from Saddam Hussein if he ignores the opportunity to extricate some of his troops from Kuwait and gets some respite for the citizens of Baghdad from the bombing. Our CF-18s are probably redundant and could be repatriated, but it could be appropriate to maintain the field hospital that Canada is setting up, particularly as this will be used to treat Iraqis as well as coalition wounded. The pressure for this move should be accompanied by widespread political action to alert Canadians to the fact that our hard won social services programs are now threatened, and that the Government should be made fully aware that moves in this direction will create widespread discontent.

The Tories have seized the opportunity from this war to carry out their retrograde program; let us now turn the tables on them and force them to find other ways to finance social programs that will not come out of the pockets of the working women and men of Canada.

Left Caucus conference prepares convention resolutions

By Lois Bédard
St. David-St. George

The Ontario Left Caucus emerged as an important centre for the exchange of ideas in the programmatic future of the ONDP as key Party activists met to consider 45 policy resolutions in eight workshops at a Left Caucus policy resolutions conference on December 1 and 2, 1990.

At a plenary session of the conference, ONDP Left Caucus co-chairperson, Gord Doctorow, outlined the key role the left could play at a time when Ontario's first NDP government was being subjected to conflicting pressures in the midst of a recessionary slide. Doctorow hailed the NDP victory as a significant gain for the Canadian working class and emphasized the importance of implementing its electoral program to meet the needs of the people. He also stressed the urgency of integrating activists from the independent, social movements into all levels of the Party and government. A socialist strategy, he argued, was essential to reverse the structural causes of unemployment and recession.

The conference workshops generated in-depth discussions on a variety of issues.

Gordon Perks of Greenpeace, Dave McRoberts of Pollution Probe and Toronto City Councillor Jack Layton led an exciting discussion on The Environment.

Women's rights were promoted under the leadership of Carmelle Harrison in a presentation on Caring for Dependent Seniors. Dr. Mimi Duvinsky, representing Physicians for Choice led a spirited discussion of Bill 43 on Recriminalizing Abortion.

Marguerite Anderson, representing the National Action Committee on Violence, gave a thorough overview of this urgent issue with specific references to the judicial and educational system.

Housing issues were examined by Penny Bethke of Labor Co-op Housing and Michael Shapcott of Bread Not Circuses.

Lennox Farrell of the Black Action Defence Committee outlined ways to combat racism in Ontario through a civilian investigative agency and a stronger, more representative Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Frank Dreaver of the Canadian Leonard Pelletier Defence

Committee exposed the injustice to Indians at Wounded Knee and the frame-up of Leonard Pelletier while outlining specific actions to be taken by those who believe in justice and freedom for Natives.

Roz Doctorow, of the Federation of Women Teachers Association of Ontario, presented elementary education resolutions on funding, class size and on the need for teacher training institutions to select teacher candidates who proportionally reflect our multicultural, multilingual and multiracial society.

Manfred Netzel, a vice-president of the City of York branch of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, outlined the secondary school teachers view of concomitants to de-streaming and/or alternatives to be explored.

Olivia Chow, an NDP Toronto Board of Education Trustee, presented a resolution, with clear direction for de-streaming public schools.

Ron Martin, a vice-president of OPSEU, supported increased funding for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. He presented resolutions on pay equity, funding for post-secondary education restricted to public institutions, and for increased time for generic skills and general education for college credentials to be relevant to the new technological age.

Olivia Ribeiro, co-chairperson of the U. of T. NDP Club and Jeff Smith, editor of the Firebrand (journal of the Glendon Campus NDP Club), outlined the need for university tuition freezes and a schedule for eliminating undergraduate fees.

What happened to the resolutions? All 45 were distributed throughout provincial ridings via the participants at the Left Caucus Conference and the ONDP Provincial Council delegates at the December 8, 1990 Provincial Council. Each of the resolutions was adopted by various ridings and will be available for consideration at the March 2-4 Convention of the ONDP.

To prepare for the convention, the ONDP Left Caucus is holding a meeting on Friday, February 22 to discuss floor strategies, executive elections, and specific resolutions of interest to delegates. Come to 10 King College Road, the Sanford Fleming Building #1105 on Friday at 7:30 p.m. Bring your resolutions book.

Left Caucus Newsletter

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Left Caucus program at the Ontario NDP convention

At the March 1991 Convention of the Ontario NDP, the Left Caucus supported two candidates for Provincial Executive. The ONDP Left Caucus ran Member-at-Large candidate Harry Kopyto on the following program:

For an Independent and Socialist Canada

Ontario is sliding into an extended recession and de-industrialization of the economy — the result of the Free Trade Agreement and a high interest (low dollar) policy designed to benefit continental corporations. The continentalization of the North American economy into a single free trade region, soon likely to include Mexico, is already draining away our best paying and highly skilled jobs in industries such as steel and auto parts. It is eroding the ability of governments to maintain social security measures. The recession is hurting the most vulnerable in our midst: youth and the old, women and minorities, tenants and students, the poor and the disabled. Businesses close their doors. Welfare rolls swell. The jobless walk the streets. Even wealthy Toronto has depression-style food banks and thousands of homeless. Yet the NDP holds provincial power for the first time in history, carrying the hopes and expectations of the people who elected us to protect them in this crisis of an uncaring capitalist system.

In the era of trade blocs and fierce trade competition, capitalism is leading us to permanently lowered living standards and chronic unemployment. Which road will lead us out of this morass? The Left Caucus believes that the current economic crisis calls for a bold initiative towards socialism, a democratic plan to take hold of our economic base before it is too late, and preserve what wealth still remains through a dynamic public planned economy. Then we can begin to keep the promises which won us power and maintain the credibility needed to make us the party of the future.

Socialist Measures to Combat De-industrialization and Unemployment

- For public ownership of businesses that are threatened by de-industrialization and recession.
- Give workers the option to co-own and manage run-away plants in cooperation with public authorities.
- For a strong public presence in the financial sector to allow government to implement low-cost credit.
- Establish workplace democracy through workers' self-management in crown and government corporations.

Social Justice for All!

- For a fully funded Human Rights Commission, accountable to those it is designed to protect and for the legalization of the right to sue for discrimination.
- For affirmative action programs and training to permit disabled persons, women, Natives and people of color

proportionate representation at senior levels of administration in all government institutions.

- For an independent civilian board to investigate and review allegations of police abuse.
- For public participation in control of the legal profession to stop preferential treatment in favor of establishment lawyers (Lang/Michener, Outerbridge) and suppression of critically-minded lawyers (Kopyto, Codina).

For an Activist Party!

- For a party which recruits activists from the women's, antiwar, environmental, and anti-racist movements.
- For participation in these movements as New Democrats and building the NDP as the feminist, antiwar, anti-racist and environmentalist party of Ontario.
- For a strategy which combines support for the social movements with a strategy to win labor to power.

Support for NDP Municipal Campaigns!

- Encourage full NDP label municipal slates in cities and towns across Ontario.
- Support NDP mayoralty candidates to promote the concept of labor to power at the municipal level.

For a Labor-Socialist Press!

- Open up the Ontario Democrat to contributions from all the ridings and increase frequency of publication as a means of developing an informed and motivated grass-roots party.
- Promote a public mass labor paper that challenges the monopoly of the Big Business press.

Environmental Action Now!

- Expropriate chronic corporate polluters.
- Allow workers to control health and safety issues on the shop floor.

For an Independent and Dynamic Youth Section!

- For a dynamic, autonomous youth movement which has the resources to win youth to the party.
- For Young New Democrats clubs in universities and high schools throughout Ontario.
- For a strong youth movement that can energize and inspire the party.

For Affordable and Plentiful Quality Housing!

- Keep the promise to cap rental increases to the rate of inflation.
- For mass, public housing projects under residents' control to fight homelessness and poverty.

The NDP stands at a crossroads. If the landlords can invest thousands of dollars to tell New York bankers not to invest in Ontario in order to get the laws which they want to get passed, the NDP must be really committed to stand by the program which allowed it to win power. Socialism is no longer just a desirable idea. It is the solution to meet the burning crisis of our times. If we do not act now, there will be nothing left to save.

The Left Caucus Newsletter and You

Each issue of the Newsletter costs about \$900. That includes getting the union label, printing, mailing, and distributing copies at meetings and rallies. All the typing, setting, and designing is done by volunteer labor. And it's worth it. Because the Newsletter expresses the voice of left-wing opinion inside the NDP. We strive to link up all the ongoing struggles with the struggle for socialism.

In Canada, the existence of the NDP as a mass labor party allows us to *combine socialist theory with practical organizing*. Despite the limitations of leadership and program within the NDP, it nonetheless remains the arena of independent workingclass politics. It is the area in which socialists can help to shape and influence the real struggles.

The Left Caucus Newsletter continues to battle on our collective behalf. We use it to bring together the individual socialists scattered throughout the Party and to provide a forum for political discussion and collaboration. With the election of an NDP government in Ontario, it is both opportune and necessary to offer a serious left perspective to the new groups of social activists that are working within this political vehicle.

While the work of the Newsletter is entirely voluntary, we have been able to improve the technology of production to provide readers with an attractive as well as informative paper. However, volunteer labor alone and the small subscription fee that is charged are insufficient to sustain the Newsletter. We need your financial support.

You can help to sustain this vital project

with your donations. Every financial contribution goes towards ensuring that the voice of socialism will continue to be heard inside the NDP. As the recession, continentalization of the Canadian economy, and de-industrialization continue, working people are faced with profoundly destructive effects to their lives and their communities. Big Business's agenda, purveyed by its loyal lieutenants in the Tory government, is pushing for a rollback in the social gains working people have fought for and won. We must go beyond the Party leadership's efforts to try to conciliate the interests of Big Business with those of the province or country. Women, youth, Native peoples, people of color, ostracized minorities all have an urgent stake in the project of an *independent and socialist Canada* alternative we in the Left Caucus are arguing for in the pages of the Newsletter.

Your financial contribution has political, material, and moral value. Please send your cheques payable to the ONDP Left Caucus and mail them to ONDP Left Caucus, Station M, Box 107, Toronto, Ontario, M6S 4T2. You can make your donation count even more by sending us a series of post-dated cheques. That way we can count on a funding base to plan a number of future issues. We rely on you because we rely on each other.

In Socialist Solidarity,

The Editors

Left Caucus Newsletter

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Add my address to the Left Caucus Newsletter mailing list. I enclose a contribution to help finance and circulate the Newsletter for which I will receive the next several issues at the attached address. (Please send at least \$10 as this is a minimal amount necessary to meet our expenses. We really require greater amounts to allow us to increase our periodicity and meet inflationary expenses.) **Please print.**

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